



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

HUSBAND, WIFE, SIBLINGS INDICTED FOR SHAM MARRIAGES

Sister married brother, husband married sister-in-law to facilitate immigration

FRESNO, Calif.- A husband and wife who allegedly divorced to marry the wife's younger brother and sister were indicted and arrested today along with the two siblings for conspiring to use fraudulent marriages to obtain immigration benefits.

The indictment, announced today by United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott, was the result of an investigation in the United States and India by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents.

Fresno residents Harbans Kaur Hothi, 52; Paramjit Singh Taggar, 44; Gurdeep Singh Atwal, 43; and San Jose resident Pritam Kaur, 35, were charged with one count of conspiracy and multiple counts of making false statements about marriages that were entered into for the purpose of obtaining immigration benefits. All four are charged in the conspiracy count.

The normal waiting time to immigrate to the United States from India as a brother or sister of a United States citizen is approximately 13 years, whereas there is no waiting period to enter the United States as a spouse of a United States citizen.

According to the indictment, Hothi and Taggar are both natives of India and naturalized United States citizens. They had been married and were raising two children together. The couple agreed to obtain a divorce for the purpose of entering into sham marriages with Atwal and Kaur, who are the younger sister and brother of Taggar, respectively.

The indictment alleges that after they were divorced, Hothi and Taggar traveled to India. There, Hothi married Atwal, who is Taggar's younger sister, and Taggar married Kaur, her younger brother. The indictment alleges this was done for the purpose of filing visa petitions for Atwal and Kaur to enter the United States.

Additionally, Hothi faces two counts of making false statements, Taggar faces three counts of making false statements, Atwal faces four counts of making false statements, and Kaur faces five counts of making false statements.

A federal grand jury in Fresno returned the indictment earlier this month, and it was unsealed in U.S. District Court today.

The indictment alleges that, since January 1994, the defendants conspired to obtain immigration benefits for Atwal and Kaur by filing applications with immigration officials that contained false statements.

If convicted, they each face a maximum sentence of five years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine for the conspiracy count, and up to 10 years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine for each count of making false statements. Because defendants Kaur and Atwal are aliens, they also face removal from the United States to India.

The four are scheduled to appear before a United States magistrate judge in Fresno Wednesday at 11 a.m.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.